United Nations

Press Release

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# MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

◆ Security Council demands that Iraq implement its acceptance of all previous Council resolutions on Iraq-Kuwait situation; Foreign Minister of Iraq states in letter to Council President that Iraq agrees to fulfil those obligations; Council subsequently calls on Sanctions Committee to act promptly on requests for humanitarian assistance stemming from situation.

◆ International Committee of Red Cross informs United Nations that convoy carrying 10 prisoners of war released by Iraq is due to arrive in Amman tonight.

◆ Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific says Gulf crisis reduces remittances, export earnings, including tourism, to Asia-Pacific region.

◆ President of General Assembly meets with Foreign Minister of Albania during official visit to that country.

◆ Ilter Turkmen assumes post as Commissioner-General of United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East.

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The Security Council meet in two open meetings over the weekend to address the situation in the Persian Gulf.

On Saturday, 2 March, in its first open meeting on the subject since the end of November, the Council demanded that Iraq implement its acceptance of all its previous 12 resolutions stemming from Iraq's invasion and occupation of Kuwait.

The Council acted by adopting resolution 686 (1991), in which it also recognized that the provisions of resolution 678 (1990) remained valid. In that text, the Council had authorized Member States "to use all necessary means" to restore international peace and security in the area.

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The vote on the draft text, sponsored by Belgium, France, Romania, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom, the United States and Zaire, was 11 in favour to 1 against (Cuba), with 3 abstentions (China, India, Yemen).

Under the terms of the resolution, the Council demanded that Iraq repeal all Iraqi laws annexing Kuwait; accept its liability for war losses and damages; release all Kuwaiti and third country civilian detainees; and begin immediately to return all Kuwaiti property it had seized. The text also called on Iraq to cease hostile actions, send its military commanders to discuss the cessation of hostilities, arrange for immediate access to and release of all prisoners of war, and assist in identifying Iraqi mines, booby traps and other explosives.

Before the vote on the text, the Council voted to reject 17 Cuban amendments to the draft. Under the proposed revisions, the Council would have decided on an immediate cease-fire, requesting the Secretary-General to deploy a United Nations peace-keeping force in the area. All Member States would have been asked to provide humanitarian assistance to Iraq and Kuwait.

In addition, the amendments would have deleted all reference to the continued validity of the Council's earlier authorization to Member States to use "all necessary means" to implement its resolutions on the Iraq-Kuwait situation.

While these amendments were not adopted, the Council met again Sunday evening, 3 March, to address the humanitarian aspects of the situation. It called upon the Sanctions Committee established under resolution 661 (1990) "to continue to act promptly on requests submitted to it for humanitarian assistance" stemming from the situation between Iraq and Kuwait.

Through a statement read out by its President, Peter Hohenfellner of Austria, the Council urged the Sanctions Committee to pay particular attention to recommendations on critical medical, public health and nutritional conditions in Iraq submitted to it by the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and other organizations.

The Council also welcomed Secretary-General Javier Pérez de Cuéllar's decision to send an urgent mission led by Under-Secretary-General Martti Ahtisaari to the area to assess the needs. It invited the Secretary-General to keep it informed "in the shortest possible time" on the progress of his mission, on which it pledged to take immediate action.

Also on Sunday, the United Nations received a letter from Iraqi Foreign Minister Tariq Aziz, saying the Iraqi Government would "fulfil its obligations" under Saturday's resolution. He asked the Security Council to declare a formal cease-fire and to lift all sanctions against Baghdad.

In a separate development, the Secretary-General commented this morning on the humanitarian mission to go to Iraq and Kuwait, saying he hoped it would leave in a couple of days.

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In reply to questions by correspondents, the Secretary-General said he was happy that the humanitarian work was being coordinated with the Security Council. It was up to the Council, he said, to decide when to lift the sanctions against Iraq and Kuwait, but he hoped it would happen as soon as possible.

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The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) informed the United Nations today that it had picked up the 10 prisoners of war released this morning by Iraq and was now heading to Amman, to hand them over to their respective Governments. The Committee said the prisoners -- six American, three British and one Italian -- were expected to arrive in Amman tonight.

On Saturday, the Red Cross announced that it had sent a team to Kuwait City to assess medical and sanitation requirements and to provide protection for all foreign nationals who did not yet have diplomatic representation in Kuwait.

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Most Asian-Pacific countries' economies have worsened during 1990 -- a backlash of the Persian Gulf crisis -- according to a new report by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The region's five net oil exporters, however, were not affected economically by the crisis.

The report said the countries most severely affected by the Gulf conflict were eight developing countries members of ESCAP -- Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka and Thailand -- which were over $7 billion short on their balance of payments for last year.

The United Nations trade embargo on Iraq, the report added, accounted for these countries' loss in exports of almost $1 billion and a loss in remittances of nearly $1.5 billion.

According to ESCAP, the major impact came from the increase in oil prices. Considering that the price of oil averaged $25 per barrel for the whole of 1990, the net oil-importing countries stood to lose nearly $5 billion. The gains of the five net oil-exporting developing countries of the region -- Brunei Darussalam, China, Indonesia, Iran and Malaysia -- would amount to about $8 billion.

The Commission also warned in its report that the Pacific island region might see a future reduction in development assistance, given the uncertainties in the global environment. This would hamper the region's attempt to finance badly needed infrastructure development, the report stated.

The Commission is scheduled to hold its forty-seventh session in Seoul from 1 to 10 April.

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The President of the General Assembly, Guido de Marco (Malta), met over the weekend with senior officials in Albania, while on a visit at the invitation of the Government.

Yesterday, the President met with leaders of three political parties who discussed plans for free national elections in the country, scheduled for the end of March. He also met with representatives of the Albanian Human Rights Forum for a review of the human rights situation in Albania.

On Saturday evening, the President met with Foreign Minister Muhamet Kapllani to discuss political developments in Albania and cooperation between the United Nations and Albania. In his capacity as Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Malta, Mr. de Marco discussed with the Albanian Foreign Minister the roles of Malta and Albania in the peace and security process in Europe and the Mediterranean.

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Ilter Turkmen of Turkey today assumed his post as Commissioner-General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

He replaces Giorgio Giacomelli of Italy, who has been appointed Director of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme.

Mr. Turkmen comes to UNRWA from Paris, where he has served as Turkey's Ambassador to France since 1988. Before that, he served two terms as Turkey's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York (1985-1988 and 1975-1978) and one term (1983-1985) as his country's representative at the United Nations Office at Geneva. From 1980 to 1983, Mr. Turkmen served as Foreign Minister of Turkey. He has also been Ambassador to the Soviet Union and Greece and, from 1979 to 1980, served as Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Thailand, dealing with humanitarian issues.

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